

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

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*File*  
*50C 11-2*  
**DG 082** *R*

TO : POL Files  
Amembassy Buenos Aires

FROM : POL - Townsend B. Friedman *B*

SUBJECT: Conversation with Admiral Girling

DATE: September 17, 1981

Last night at the UNITAS reception, I had a long talk with Admiral Eduardo M. Girling, Chief of Argentine Naval Intelligence. Among the subjects of interest were:

-- After small talk, Girling turned the talk to the current political scene. He offered the opinion that perhaps things were quiet superficially but that appearances could be misleading. He said he was particularly worried about the current economic situation and its ultimate political impact. It soon emerged that he was not talking about the reaction of politicians and labor but about the reaction of the Army. He is concerned that the Army may react by upsetting either the "process" or Viola or both, it would seem. He was clear that his understanding of what goes on in the Army is, at best, clouded. "I don't know what happens in the Army. They keep their secrets." However, he did offer the opinion that whatever else can be said about the Army, it is today united behind Galtieri -- and it seemed clear from his remarks that Galtieri is the man he expects to do something if anything is done.

-- Girling said that the "multipartidaria" is through as a political force. It has lost the initiative and cannot agree even within itself how to behave towards the government. He said that the military itself does not have any quick solutions for the present economic situation but neither do the politicians. In effect, there is no reasonable alternative to the military. In this situation, he does not expect any change through a civilian challenge to military leadership. He did agree that Balbin's funeral was an anti-military rally, but did not seem too worried about the implications -- here he may have been whistling in the dark, given his great concern about the seriousness of the economic situation.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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-- He said that there indeed is a small number of Montoneros operating in the country, including those who interrupted TV audio earlier this month. These Montoneros, "we know," are operating on orders to engage in agitation but not to carry out terrorist acts. They present no security threat. He described the instrument they used to break into TV broadcasts as quite small and capable of being transported and hidden in a car -- its range is no more than four blocks. I asked in this context what would happen to them if they were caught. Would they disappear? He said that he believed that "such things belong to the past." He also said terrorism in Argentina is down to the level it was at in about 1967-68.

-- The Bárbaro kidnapping. Bárbaro's name came up in the discussion of the Peronist Intransigent Movement (MIP). Girling said that many people refuse to see the facts of the MIP -- it is closely tied to both foreign and domestic communists. Saadi's ties to the communists go back to the mid-fifties. On one of his trips to Europe recently he had contact with exiled Argentine terrorists as well. Girling said that despite the stories at the time, the Navy had absolutely nothing to do with Bárbaro's kidnapping. Once it happened, "we learned a lot about it," he said. Somewhat delphicly, he stated that Bárbaro was taken as a result of a disagreement between "two elements" (presumably of the security services). Bárbaro's interrogation, he said, focused heavily on the ties of the MIP with the communists and others. Girling added that his MIP partners may have known that Bárbaro answered all these questions as truthfully as he could when they expelled him from MIP after he was freed. Girling said that he did not think that the perpetrators of the kidnapping thought about the political reaction that would follow it both inside and outside Argentina. In this context, he said that he had worked very hard to try to minimize the negative reaction outside Argentina. It seems from his remarks that he is highly sensitized to foreign opinion.

Cleared: POLCOUNS: JFKing ✓

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